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## Hymn Singing...During Committee Meeting?



I've had the privilege of serving as a delegate on the committee tasked with considering General Synod Resolution #11, "Restructuring Conference Boundaries." The title is a bit misleading, as the resolution's purpose is really to encourage Conferences to have vigorous conversation about how to revitalize Conferences to better fulfill their missions and ministries as part of Christ's body in the UCC. Avenues for

revitalization include sharing resources among Conferences, "out of the box" thinking about partnerships with other Conferences and their covenant partners (and even other denominations), and potentially reconfiguring Conference boundaries, all drawing on the resources and facilitative ability of the National Setting. Per the Constitution of the UCC, any reconfiguration of Conference boundaries would have to begin at the Conference level and later be approved by a future General Synod.

I'm proud to say that the Southeast Conference is ahead of the curve on these conversations—on dreaming and visioning how we might more creatively and effectively steward our resources to better serve our local churches in their mission to transform lives and communities. I was able to share with the committee that the SEC is in the process of calling a Conference Minister who will be Designated specifically to help us have that conversation and envision our future outside the box. I was also able to share that as part of the Southern Region, the SEC just received a \$10,000 grant to develop a regional website that will serve as the landing page for each of our Conferences and act as an evangelism tool for anyone in the South who—like many!—are not familiar with the welcome & witness of the UCC but are interested in getting to know us.

Our committee worked to ensure that our resolution conveyed the urgency of rethinking how we can best support the church's mission while grounding any changes in local churches, Associations, and Conferences. We also created a mechanism for resourcing from and accountability to and with the National setting. I was "volun-told" to help refine the language of the resolution and thoroughly enjoyed the adrenaline rush of rewriting a complex document in tandem with two other delegates in under 15 minutes! It was a pleasure to collaborate with a diverse group of people who worked passionately and in (relative) concert to bring forth this vital statement. We even shared in a rousing, harmonizing rendition of "I've Got Peace Like a River" while we waited for revised copies of the resolution to be printed. Not a common experience for committee work!

Another highlight of my time here at Synod: attending the (legal!) wedding of former Southeast Conference members David Sigmund and Jay Greaves officiated by SEC pastor Susannah Davis and GLBTQ rights activist and UCC minister Mel White. Jay & Dave's nuptials were powerfully witnessed by several hundred Synod attendees as well as news media and family & friends. Rev. Susannah reminded us that it's "just love," while Rev. Mel encouraged Dave & Jay to look to Christ and each other to strengthen their love of, and witness to, their communities and especially to those who feel no love.

And of course, morning runs on the California beach and evening fellowship with SEC members and friends top off this quirky, sometimes fractious but always joyous family reunion. Thank you for sending me as one of your delegates!


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### About Leah Lyman Waldron

Leah Lyman Waldron is the co-pastor of Praxis UCC, a funky, progressive new church start in Atlanta, GA and she currently serves as a chaplain resident at Children's

 Healthcare of Atlanta. She has been happily roped into helping to teach the SEC's online UCC History & Polity class; serving on the Conference search committee for a new Designated Conference Minister; serving as an SEC delegate to General Synod 29; and working ad interim on Search & Call for the Conference. She loves cooking vegan food and watching Dr. Who with her husband & co-pastor Chris.

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Designed by Epiphany 2013

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